



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
Maryland's Social Services Agency



PRESS RELEASE

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**TALBOT COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES NAMED
AUDREY HANSEN THE 2011 FOSTER PARENT OF THE YEAR**

EASTON – The Talbot County Department of Social Services named Audrey Hansen of Easton as the 2011 Foster Parent of the Year. Although Hansen has only been a foster parent since September 2010, she has played an important role in providing short-term emergency and weekend respite care for children of all ages in Talbot County.



According to Susan Merriken, Foster Care and Adoption Supervisor at the Talbot County Department of Social Services, “In the short time she has been a foster parent, Audrey has never said ‘no’ when we have asked her to take a child. She has been a vital part of our foster care team in providing children in Talbot County safe environments in times of need.”

Hansen, who works full-time with the Maryland Department of the Environment, never had children of her own. She comments, “I always wondered about doing foster care because I have always loved kids, including my nieces and nephews. I did not think I could do foster care and work

full-time. I found out differently after taking the Department of Social Services Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education (P.R.I.D.E.) parent training program for foster and adoptive parents.”

She credits the supportive staff at the Talbot County Department of Social Services, the Talbot County Public Schools and the Easton Family YMCA with making her job as a foster parent successful

- Martin O'Malley, Governor
- Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor
- Theodore Dallas, Secretary

adding, "I learned that there are many support systems available to help foster parents who work, including before school and afterschool care in Talbot County."

Although Hansen started with teenagers, she has had children of all ages, from elementary through high school. She states, "I love giving these children a safe and happy place to stay, where they may gain a sense of normalcy they may never have had before."

Hansen explains that the children she has had in her home are respectful and a delight to have around, which is often not the perception of the community. She adds, "These children just want to know someone cares. It has been the most rewarding thing I have ever done. I am able to give back to the community by keeping these children in the community they know, which is one of the most important aspects of being a foster parent."

For information about becoming a licensed foster/adoptive parent, contact the Talbot County Department of Social Services at 410-770-4848 or attend the regional information session for prospective foster/adoptive parents on Tuesday, June 21 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Talbot County Department of Social Services at 301 Bay Street, Unit #5 in Easton. The next nine-week P.R.I.D.E. Training at the Talbot County Department of Social Services begins Wednesday, July 6, 2011, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The Talbot County Department of Social Services is a field office of the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR) the state's social service provider. DHR collaborates with 24 local jurisdictions to: provide foster care, adoption, and protective services to children; collect and distribute child support payments; provide protective services, case- management, supportive housing, in-home aide services, and respite care to vulnerable adults; and provide temporary cash, food stamps, and medical assistance to families. It also funds programs for homeless persons, refugees, and migrant workers. Last year, DHR served over one million people in need. In terms of its annual budget, DHR is Maryland's fifth largest state agency.

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